

DR. MAITLAND'S GRANDSON.

BY LOUISE S. DORR.

THE frosts of autumn were just coming on, and I was looking forward to a lonely winter. Elizabeth Prout, who had been both servant and companion to me for the last ten years, was going to leave me. It was a very foolish thing for one of her age to do, and I was greatly vexed with her. Elizabeth was going to be married. I had said my say about it pretty plainly, thinking she would come to see the matter as I did. She had always "set great store," as she termed it, by my opinion, but in this case she preferred her own, giggling like a girl when I told her what a ridiculous thing I thought it was, and acting, for aught I could see, as foolishly headstrong as if she had been sixteen instead of fifty-six. So I had now no hope of dissuading her, and, as I have said, I was looking forward to a lonely winter.

The house in which I lived was the old Maitland homestead. It belonged to Doctor Maitland, and I was Doctor Maitland's maiden sister. He was the oldest of our family, I the youngest, and there had been five between us. But the others had inherited consumption from my mother, and only John and I were now left of the seven. I had not seen him since I was a girl of fifteen, and now I was forty-five. I knew from his letters that it had been many years since Doctor Maitland's only son died, and that his wife's death had quickly followed that of his boy. Beyond these bare facts John never wrote me much about his family affairs, and I had forbore to question him. I think I had always stood somewhat in awe of my oldest brother, perhaps because he was richer than any of the rest, and quite famous. Some of his property came by way of his wife, but he had been unusually successful in his profession, and had also written valuable medical treatises, which gave him influence and reputation. For many years he had lived abroad, sometimes in Paris, sometimes in Germany, though I believe he had visited all the most famous medical institutions in Europe. The great aim of Doctor Maitland's life seemed to be to extend his knowledge of all things pertaining to his profession.

Just before going abroad, John came home for a visit, bringing his wife and boy. Mrs. John—her name, like mine, was Rachel, so we all called her Mrs. John—was a pretty, soft-hearted creature, very much in love with her husband, though they had been married a dozen years at that time, and fond to idolatry of her boy. Alick was a merry, active little fellow about eleven years of age, and as full of mischief as a clear night's sky is of stars. His father had great hopes of him then, I know, but the boy died before he had quite reached his majority, and the hopes which had once

burned brightly for Alick Maitland went out in his grave.

I am conscious of going about my story in a rambling way, but I was not bred to authorship, so, if I set things down just as they come into my mind, I hope it will not be taken amiss. In consequence of my lonely way of living since the last of my sisters died, I had got a habit of thinking that my life had settled down into a stirless dead-level, and that I could look straight through it to the end. My income was amply sufficient for my wants. Consequently I had no need to worry about property. Year after year I lived on in the same place, with the same servant, visiting the same people, attending to the same little round of charities, and thought I should continue to do so until I died. If I had been younger, this might have seemed a dreary prospect. As it was, I accepted it with tranquil resignation.

Elizabeth's foolish start about getting married was the first thing to shake my belief, and then came John's letter. John was on the point of returning to America. After thirty years of absence, he was coming back to live in B——, the city where he had first begun the practice of his profession. His agent had bought him a house in Springvale Square, and John wrote that he wanted me to live with him, and matronize the new establishment. He expected to reach home about the 20th of November, and desired me to rent the house in which I was living, and get settled in the new residence before his arrival. I can hardly tell whether I was glad or sorry to go, but I had no thought of refusing John. It would be a great change for me, however, and I feared my simple country life had illy fitted me for being at the head of a grand house in a fashionable square in town. I mentioned something of this to Elizabeth, at which she flamed up directly.

"A lady's a lady the world over, and 'tisn't anyways likely you are going to begin to be unladylike for living in Springvale Square, which you never was before," said Elizabeth Prout.

This reassured me a little, though I feared Elizabeth's judgment was not much to be counted upon in such a matter, whatever it might be in questions of pickling and preserving, for on these points she was authority for all the country people around us. If Mr. Barnes was going to marry for a housekeeper, and men of his age as often marry for that as for anything, I suppose, he had made a judicious choice. Elizabeth Prout certainly *was* a good housekeeper.

It happened fortunately enough that Mr. Barnes was also in want of a house. So I rented the one I was living in to him, and, after seeing the ridiculous fond couple married, I went away regretfully at the last. I had written to my brother's agent, Mr. Craig, and he had a carriage at the depot for me when I

arrived in B——. Mr. Craig was a tallish, thin-faced man, with stumpy, gray hair, and eyes that seemed to look straight through you, as Scrooge did through old Marley's ghost to the buttons on the back of his coat. He was very polite—I am speaking now of Mr. Craig, and not of Scrooge nor the ghost—and made free use of compliments in talking with ladies. He seemed quite anxious that I should approve of the house and its appointments, since everything, he assured me, had been left to him. In taking a survey of the rooms, I was considerably bewildered by the magnificence everywhere surrounding me, and noticed a variety of elegant articles either for ornament or convenience to which I could not possibly have given a name, but I did not consider it necessary to mention this to Mr. Craig.

"Everything seems to be in perfect order, and in as good taste as possible," I remarked, when we had returned to the drawing-room.

"You cannot think what a weight your approval has taken off my mind," replied the agent. "I must confess that I had some misgivings about the height of the terra-cotta vases and one or two other matters. I am greatly relieved by your commendation, feeling sure that what *you* have praised must be beyond criticism. But I forgot the other young ladies. You will want to see them, of course."

"I did not know there were to be young ladies here," I said, surprised.

"Except yourself you mean. Yes, there are two others."

"I am forty-five. If the others have reached that mature age, it is best to let the fiction of our youth go by."

"You must be jesting about your age. But for the girls. I am surprised the doctor did not mention them. He forgets everything except what concerns his profession. There are Miss Cranstoun and Miss Appleton, nieces of the doctor's late wife. They have but lately left school, and arrived here last night."

Speaking thus, Mr. Craig rang, and desired a servant to inform the young ladies that Miss Maitland had come. They entered the room presently, and Mr. Craig introduced them to me—Miss Cranstoun first. I said I was happy to see her.

"Oh! nobody minds me. You mean that it is my cousin that you are happy to see," replied Miss Cranstoun, kissing me nevertheless with what the French call *empressement*.

I wondered at her speaking in this way, but simply affirmed that I was happy to see them both, and that I hoped we should be friends. I felt a presentiment, however, that I should like Miss Cranstoun's cousin better than herself, not, I think, because she was more beautiful, though I do not profess to be above admiring beauty when I see it in a girl's face. And Hilary Appleton was beautiful. It was like looking at a picture to study her bright face,

only a picture never changes expressions and color under your glance, as Hilary was always doing. Besides being beautiful, she was very spirited and lively, with a pretty dignity, too, which was capable of expanding into haughtiness when she was displeased.

Miss Cranstoun was not nearly so pretty as her cousin, though Selma was not really plain, as she had a habit of calling herself, some might have thought for the sake of being contradicted, but I do not want to judge her.

"What matter about a plain little body like me?" she would say. "Nobody notices me. I may see as much as I like; but it is Hilary who must prepare to run the gauntlet of all eyes, to endure the terrible ordeal—though I doubt if she finds it so—of being seen."

Such sayings were always punctuated like a sentence in a book, only caresses were used instead of punctuation marks. A tender touch of her cousin's hair or cheek, a kiss, or an embrace, standing in place of commas, semicolons, etc. It cannot be denied that Selma Cranstoun was very affectionate, being ready on the smallest provocation to hug or kiss Hilary, myself, and even Doctor Maitland, when at last my brother had come home. If I were speaking in a witness box, and obliged to tell the whole truth, I should have to admit that the girl's caresses were not entirely indispensable to my happiness. The Maitlands are not a demonstrative race. I had grown an old woman after my fashion, and my fashion was not that of the present generation. Hence it is not strange, I suppose, that some of Selma Cranstoun's ways were not altogether agreeable to me.

That wonderfully vigilant agent, Mr. Craig, had left little to be done in preparation for my brother, and it was rather dull waiting for him. It seemed impossible to begin anything, even getting acquainted with his wards until John had come. You will think it foolish, I dare say, but I missed Elizabeth Prout sadly in those days. Mrs. Binks, the new housekeeper, was a very good sort of woman for her place, but we could never have got along together at the homestead as Elizabeth and I had done.

There was bad weather at sea about the 20th, and the vessel in which Doctor Maitland had sailed was delayed several days beyond the time when it was due. It was a period of great suspense to me, but it ended at last, and John came home. I cried out my joy on his neck, forgetting the Maitland undemonstrativeness for once, and the doctor seemed almost equally moved. Then Selma and Hilary came in, and they clung to him too, and John asked, laughing, "What a man was to do with such an armful of women?"

"My dear uncle," cried Selma, "I am so glad you have come. You will prefer Hilary to me, of course. Everybody does, and do you wonder at that? See how radiantly beautiful

she is." The punctuation used at this point was a soft touch of Hilary's cheek. "But I hope you will have some crumbs of affection left for plain, uninteresting Selma."

"Self-depreciation is my cousin's substitute for self-assertion," said Hilary, quickly.

It was not a pleasant glance she got from Selma for this little speech, but the latter kissed her cousin immediately afterwards, to show that she had no ill-feeling about it, I suppose.

My brother gave up two or three days to talking with us of the many things we wished to hear about, and then withdrew to his study, feeling more at home among his books, I suppose, than among us women. He was hale and vigorous, more like a man of fifty than sixty-five, though his white hair and beard gave him a venerable appearance. His coming home was much talked of in B——, and it was arranged to give him a public dinner in consideration of the distinction he had gained. I think he would rather people would let him alone, not that he was indifferent to the fact that he stood high among his fellows, but because he was naturally retiring in disposition, and did not like having a fuss made over him. But I was going to speak of something that happened on the day of the dinner.

Somebody had just made a complimentary speech, and Doctor Maitland had risen to respond, when Mr. Craig came in, and whispered a few words in his ear, upon which the doctor was observed to grow suddenly pale, though, after a moment, he went on with his speech. It was spoken of in the next day's papers as epigrammatic, witty, and effective. When he had done, he begged the gentlemen to excuse him, as an affair of importance called his attention elsewhere. This I heard from an acquaintance, and had an unquiet evening on account of it, though I did not mention my uneasiness to any one. It was late when the doctor got home, and, instead of coming into the parlor, he went straight on to his study.

"Why don't he come in here?" asked Selma, impatiently. "I am dying to hear about the dinner."

Miss Cranstoun was much given to the use of hyperbole in speaking. If she simply wanted a glass of water, she was very likely to be "dying" for it.

"Uncle Maitland has probably had enough of talk for one day," said Hilary. "If you are really anxious to know about the dinner, I advise you to put off dying until after the more convenient season for hearing about it has arrived."

"Now, Hilary, I have a presentiment that there will never be a more convenient season than the present. Procrastination is the thief of time. Put not off until to-morrow what you wish to do to-day. I am going to invade the doctor's sanctuary. He will never mind me, you know."

"Selma!" Hilary remonstrated; and I said, "Don't go," but she was already gone. She came back after a few minutes, looking slightly vexed.

"I can't get a word out of him about the dinner," she said, "and I guess something has happened, for he speaks as if his vocal organs had got the rheumatism, and were stiffened at their joints. He wants to see Aunt Rachel."

The girl's flippancy of speech sounded gratingly to me, and I could have found it in my heart to reprimand her severely, but I restrained myself, obeying the call to the study instead. My brother was sitting back in a lounging-chair, leaning his head upon one hand. He had a troubled look, and his brow was knitted, as I had seen it when he was thinking deeply.

"Did you want me, John?" I asked, dreading to disturb him when he had on that thoughtful brow, but feeling that I ought to let him know I had come, for he seemed not to have noticed my entrance.

"Sit down, Rachel," he said, without changing his position, "I want to talk with you presently."

I did as he desired, and sat so long that I began to think he had forgotten about my being there. I had a strange, uneasy feeling, and dreaded quite as much as I desired to hear his communication. At last he spoke.

"Rachel," he said, "I have never told you about Alick."

"Only that he died a long time ago," I replied.

"Yes. He died a long time ago. It was a great blow to us, and I think the shock hastened his mother's death. Perhaps I was hard with Alick. I almost think now that I was. He had a superabundance of animal spirits, and was led into wild courses, but, if he had lived, he might have tamed down into a respectable man. I had great hopes of him once. It was a sad disappointment to have him turn out as he did."

I murmured that I was very sorry.

"He fell in with a lot of idle, dissolute companions, and grew defiant of all restraint. I was always in terror lest he should bring disgrace upon my name. Sometimes I think I was too proud of the honor in which I was held, of the respect my exertions had won for me."

"You had reason to be proud, John."

"I should have remembered that 'When pride cometh, then cometh shame,' and that 'Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.' I had reason to remember it afterward. Alick grew more and more unmanageable. He spent a great deal of money. A young English lord, who had been sent abroad to escape punishment at home, was his constant companion, and their revels touched the extreme of recklessness. At last I lost all patience, and reproved Alick very roughly, telling

him I would rather see him dead than disgraced. He did not come back that night. The next, he was brought home dead. A disgraceful quarrel had arisen between him and the young English nobleman, and Alick was killed in the affray."

"Why do you give yourself the pain of telling me about it?" I asked, for his limping speech, and the dampness gathering on his forehead, showed that he was suffering grievously.

"I should never have spoken of it, I think, but for what has happened to-day. Rachel, I have seen Alick Maitland to-day."

"John!"

"It is a strange story. Alick left a wife and child at his death, though I never knew it until a few hours ago. The woman was not a person I could have acknowledged as a daughter; but I would have provided for the child. She, foreseeing that I would insist upon separating them, never claimed my protection. She died a few weeks ago, and to-day I have seen Alick Maitland."

"Your grandson?"

"Yes. He is a wild, rowdyish youth, much such as his father was twenty years ago; and to-day he has been wounded in a street brawl. Not dangerously. He will not die of his wound. Rachel, what shall I do with him?"

There was something exceedingly pathetic in my brother's abrupt way of putting that question. He was not a man that was used to ask advice, his own clear head being ordinarily a sufficient counsellor; now, however, I could see that he distrusted himself. How much I wished for the ability to speak the right word in the right place then, but I was never very ready of speech when my mind was disturbed, and I could think of nothing to the purpose.

"I want to do what is right," John went on presently. "If it is true that I was too strict with this boy's father, and that if I had been less harsh at our last interview, my son might have lived to be a different man, I should not wish to repeat the fault in the case of my grandson. It is said that in every human heart there are some germs of good. Redemption may yet be possible for Alick Maitland. Shall we take him home, Rachel, and try to save him?"

"Is it for me to decide?" I asked.

"Yes. If the boy comes here, I shall trust more to your influence than my own to reclaim him. There is an atmosphere of quiet goodness about you, Rachel, which must affect him beneficially, if anything can."

My brother's praise moved me so much that I was unable to speak for a moment on account of a "lump" in my throat. When that difficulty was partially overcome, I said, "If you are going to leave it to me, I must see this youth before I decide."

"I will take you to see him in the morning."

"I am not sure that that will be best. He may think it necessary to appear reckless and

defiant if a man be present. I was about to propose that Hilary should accompany me."

"Hilary?" said Doctor Maitland, doubtfully. "What good could she do by going?"

"I think I have discovered that she has great skill in reading character, and she is never at a loss for the right thing to say."

"You say you have great faith in Hilary. Could you say as much for Selma?"

"Selma's character is more hidden. I hope that when I know her better, I shall be able to say as much and more for her."

"Selma's character hidden? I thought she was frankness itself."

"Have you not observed that the frankness is only on the surface, and that one really knows very little of her true self from being associated with her?"

"Perhaps you are right."

Then, after thinking a little, John told me I might take Hilary with me to-morrow if I thought best, and said the boy was at Mr. Craig's rooms, giving me the number and street.

There was little sleep for me that night. Like Martha of old, I was troubled about many things. The tranquil perspective by which I had once thought my future to be represented, was quite broken up, and I could see only a little way before me. So, because the prospect was cut off, I kept straining my mental vision to look through the anxieties that disquieted me, not so much for my sake as for my brother's. The effort was just as fruitless as if, standing at the base of a hill, I had tried to look through it to objects on the other side; but I did not give up trying on that account, which made the night one of great weariness to me.

The next morning, when I asked Hilary to go out with me, Selma started up at once as if she thought herself included in the invitation; but Doctor Maitland desired her to be good enough to read to him a little while, and she went off to the library with great seeming happiness. After we had started, I told Hilary where we were going, and why.

"I am glad you took me with you," she said, simply.

Then the press of people became so great, for we were getting down into the business streets now, that there was no chance for connected conversation. When we reached the place Mr. Craig opened the door for us, and was immediately affected with a rush of compliments to the lips.

"I looked down into the street just now, and fancied myself gazing into a flower-garden in mid June; but the roses were all in your cheeks, Miss Hilary. The sight of you, Miss Maitland, is like a draught of generous wine. It exhilarates; I shall live two minutes in one, so long as you consent to glorify my rooms with your presence."

And so on, until Hilary stopped him by saying that we had come to see Alick Maitland; upon which Mr. Craig led us to an inner room, saying that we should find the young man in there, and he only wished the rogue was more worthy of such distinction as our visit conferred upon him.

The young man was dressed and sitting up, having one arm in a sling. He had on a brightly-flowered dressing-gown, whose sleeves were too long for him, and kept falling down over his hands; and embroidered slippers that were worthy of the name, since at every movement they slipped nearly off his feet, they were so large for him. Evidently these articles were borrowed from Mr. Craig. The youth was rather pale, and had a fair, boyish face, in which, at the first glance, I recognized the Maitland eyes and forehead. His hair, which was neatly cut, was light brown in color, and looked soft and glossy. There was a strong smell of tobacco smoke in the room, and I saw him fling a cigar into the grate when he perceived that his visitors were ladies. He took a step or two forward, then stopped, and looked at us inquiringly.

"Are you Alick Maitland?" I asked.

"Yes, I suppose so," he returned, stooping to pull up the heel of one slipper.

"I am sorry to see you here, or at least sorry for the cause of your being here."

"What is it to you?" he inquired, with a show of recklessness, though his face reddened quickly.

"I am Doctor Maitland's sister. This young lady is Hilary Appleton, and your cousin, though not in the first degree. We have come to see whether we can give you any help in your trouble."

"It's a bad egg, isn't it? But I'd have kept out of this mess if I could. I meant to behave myself after coming here. I suppose it was the wine. I heard that Doctor Maitland was celebrating with the nobs at the St. Stephen's House, and I thought I could not deny myself the pleasure of drinking just one glass to my respected grandsire; but the wine went straight to my head, and then the fellow was bent upon a quarrel with me. I tried to keep my temper down, but it got the upper hand in spite of me, and I struck him. I suppose it's all up with me now at the Maitland head-quarters. My grandfather will cut me outright, won't he? and think he is doing God's service in washing his hands of such a sinner?"

"What did you expect your grandfather to do for you?" asked Hilary.

"I thought likely he might give me some money, and set me up as a gentleman."

"How does it happen that you never applied to him before?"

"I never knew I was blessed with such a relative until my mother was on her deathbed, about three months ago. Her game was to

keep dark till the old man died, and then bring me in for the heir. It was a pretty good trump card which she held, but she did not live to see the game played out."

"Have you always gone by the name of Maitland?"

"No; my mother gave me her own name. Until I came here, I always went by the name of Savage."

"If I had been you, then, having borne the name of Savage so long, I would have borne it yet longer, rather than take that of a man whom all good men love and revere, only to"—

"Why don't you speak it out? You mean only to disgrace it."

"I do mean only to disgrace it, and I will speak it out. Do you know with what honor your grandfather has covered the name of Maitland? Do you know that when a young man of your own age he had neither money nor influence, nor yet a liberal education? He has gained all these by his own tireless endeavors—by the indomitable exercise of such powers as God gave him as a man. If I had been you I would have died before coming to him, unless I could have come without bringing him dishonor."

"You are hard on a fellow," said the young man, again stooping to pull up one of those troublesome slippers.

"It is you who are hard on yourself," Hilary returned, speaking without hurry or heat, but in a grave, steadfast tone, as she had done from the first, "because, being endowed with reason, manhood, and physical strength, you are yet content to let your life go by without attempting anything worthy of such endowments. What is the career which, by your own confession, you had marked out for yourself? To get money from your grandfather and be set up as a gentleman; that is, to live in idleness and spend the money which some one else has earned in dissolute practices. Are there then no stones to break, no furrows to turn, no shoes to peg, nor anvils to smite, that you make deliberate choice of so useless an existence?"

"But, Hilary," I interposed, "you know that Alick had resolved to reform." I pitied the boy so sorely that I was glad to be able to say even this in his favor, though on the balance-sheet of a man's life broken resolutions may not count for much perhaps.

"Let him make that resolve good; let him add to it the resolution that his life shall be redeemed from the worthlessness as well as from wrong doing; let him adhere to both purposes for the accomplishment of something worth living for, and I will guarantee that Doctor Maitland will then acknowledge his grandson with proud affection rather than with heart-aching and forebodings of renewed disgrace. There, Alick! my lecture is ended. If it seems unkind, forgive me. I have spoken more in

sorrow than in anger. Aunt Rachel, are you ready to go now?"

I rose, though a little unwillingly, for I wanted to say something kind to Alick, something to soften the asperity of Hilary's rebuke, which I thought unnecessarily severe; but I had not the right words at command. While I hesitated, the boy stepped quickly before Hilary, dropping off both slippers on the way, and leaving them to mark his path in approaching her.

"Hilary," he said, as gravely as she had spoken, and without a morsel of the reckless flippancy which had marked his speech hitherto. "Your scolding stirs something within me that might have made a man of me if it had been sooner roused. If it is not yet too late, if I succeed in redeeming myself, what will you be to me then? What shall we be to each other?"

"Cousins—as we are now; but I will consent to be lectured by you then, if you find me at fault," answered Hilary, smiling. Then, to me, "Come, Aunt Rachel. This young man is not in need of the sedative you are anxious to administer. He will do very well without it."

I slipped my purse into Alick's hand. "It is for your present needs," I said. "I shall report hopefully of you to your grandfather, and you may expect to see him soon. Good-by!"

"You are very good, Aunt Rachel. Aren't you going to give me your blessing before you go?"

This was spoken laughingly, but I think with more feeling than he would have cared should become visible.

"To be sure I will," I said, and down upon his knees he went, uplifting his bright, boyish face toward mine, and laughing still, but not in mockery, I am sure. I touched his head with my hands, murmuring, "God bless you, Alick," and then hurried out of the room, followed by Hilary.

"How do you find our patient?" asked Mr. Craig, jumping up to open the door for us.

"Much better than I expected. I have great hopes of him," I replied.

"Oh, yes. He'll be about in a day or two. The wound is much slighter than was at first supposed."

It was unnecessary to explain that I had not spoken with any reference to the boy's wound. So I merely bade the polite agent "Good-day," to which he replied, as was to be expected from him, by a compliment.

"Shall we take a car?" asked Hilary, when we were once more in the street.

I replied that I would rather walk, being conscious of inner restlessness, and feeling that a street car would be much too slow for me in that state of mind. The distance was a good mile, perhaps more; yet it was a surprise to me when we entered the square where we lived, for I had been thinking busily to take any note of our progress.

Doctor Maitland called me into the study as soon as we reached home, and when I had told him about our visit, he started up all in a tremor, and began putting on his overcoat. "My poor Alick," he said, and I knew, by the tender pity in his tone, and by the eagerness of his whole manner, that his heart was toward his grandson, even as of old David's heart was toward Absalom.

John would have gone out immediately, but was prevented by a visitor—a Reverend Doctor of some repute, and a great gift at conversation—who stayed to dinner, so that it was evening before John could leave the house.

"I shall not come back alone," he assured me, when at last he was left at liberty to go.

But, as if it had not been proved over and over again until one would think the fact quite clearly established, that human intentions are not infallible, we were furnished with a new demonstration of the axiom that night. The doctor was quite distressed about it, and wore a very sober face when he entered the parlor, alone, in spite of his expressed intentions.

"Why did you not bring Alick?" I asked.

"I did not find him. Read this."

It was a little note in which Alick left his love for Aunt Rachel, hoped Hilary would repent of her unkindness toward himself, and assured his grandfather that he did not intend just now to enlarge the blot which his worthlessness had made on the Maitland name, since he was going to renounce the name. If sought, he should not be found, though his precautions in that respect would be unnecessary, he presumed, since he had no doubt his disappearance would give satisfaction to all concerned. This note was simply signed "Alick," and directed to Doctor Maitland. Mr. Craig had been obliged to leave town for a few hours, and had found his rooms deserted on returning. The note was left on his desk, and he had picked up a lady's veil on the stairs, which he sent to Hilary, believing it to be the same he had seen her wear sometimes. It was a gauzy fabric of a pale lavender color. Hilary had been obliged to send to New York for it, since it was impossible to find one to match her suit in B——."

"But," said Selma, "you did not wear your lavender suit this morning, and you had on your brown veil when you went out."

"Yes," assented Hilary; "but this is just like mine, and, strangely enough, I could not find mine anywhere, when I looked for it after dinner."

I could see that his grandson's disappearance was a great disappointment to Doctor Maitland, and I seemed to miss Alick's boyish face as if it had always belonged to our household. Hilary seemed quite loth to speak of Alick, at which I wondered somewhat, and one day I mentioned it to Selma. She laughed outright.

"Singular that Hilary should not fancy talking about our dear, lost Alick? Not at all to

my thinking. Has it never occurred to you that somebody is to blame for his sudden disappearance?"

"No. I have never thought of it."

"Now, how strange! I don't pretend to be very sharp-sighted nor very anything myself. I'm of no particular account, as I'm sure nobody can know better than I; but I do wish that you and that precious old knowledge-bin, your brother, could just look through my mental spectacles for one minute."

"Why, Selma?"

"Because you are such a precious, darling goose, and not a lineal descendant from the one whose cackling saved Rome, neither, or else you would see that Hilary has been making use of sharp practice in this affair. Don't you know that Alick was in a beautiful frame of mind when you left him, and that his note breathes a vastly different spirit, being sarcastic and bitter in the extreme? Then doesn't it follow that somebody is responsible for the change, and it's a little singular, isn't it? that Mr. Craig should have found Hilary's veil on his stairs. Oh, it's as plain as day to me, that Hilary was determined there should be no reconciliation between Alick and his grandfather."

"What motive could she have for wishing to prevent their reconciliation?"

"Sure enough! what motive? I don't see, unless she wishes to manage the thing so that Doctor Maitland shall disown his grandson, and give his property to her. She being the doctor's favorite niece, it is quite likely that if Alick don't get it, Hilary will; or, at the very least, so much of it as belonged to Aunt Maitland, since the doctor, with his fine sense of justice, would be sure to think it ought to go to some one of our family, and I don't know anybody that would be more glorified, in her own estimation, by being made an heiress than my well-beloved cousin—Hilary Appleton."

Though I assured Selma that she must be mistaken, I was greatly disturbed by what she had said. I did not mean to give the evil suspicion an inch in my heart; but it was not long in taking to itself an ell. I began to look distrustfully upon all that Hilary said or did. It is easy to fancy some ungenerous purpose lurking under the simplest actions when once you have learned to doubt one's sincerity. It was not long before I discovered that John also was displeased with Hilary, and this knowledge added strength to my own doubts of her. So just as

"The creeping tide came up along the sand,
And o'er and o'er the sand,
And round and round the sand,
As far as eye could see,"

in the tristful little poem of "Mary of Dee," a creeping mistrust of Hilary came into my mind, and my old faith in her was quite lost sight of,

buried as it was in the strong flood-tide of suspicion.

I had no wish to treat the girl less kindly than I had always done, but I am not good at disguises, and I suppose she must have detected some change in my manner. Sometimes I would feel her eyes fixed upon my face, and when I had looked up, unwillingly, but compelled as it seemed by some subtle magnetism, I was met by a look at once steadfast and yet so grieved, that if I had not accused her in my heart of being mercenary and unscrupulous, I must have softened toward her, as wax is softened in the sun's heat.

"How have I offended you, Aunt Rachel?" she asked me once.

"I am not offended. Why should you think I am?"

"Because neither you nor Uncle Maitland seem pleased with anything I do or say now. I thought you liked me at first, and I am sure you are disappointed in me. If I only knew in what particular, perhaps I might retrieve my fault."

"I have heard no complaint of you from my brother, nor have I any to make myself. You must not expect two elderly people who have lived alone so much as Doctor Maitland and I have, to be very entertaining company for gay young ladies. You have your young friends, your drives, parties, and such other amusements as the town affords. What do you complain of?"

She turned toward me her beautiful eyes, with the grieved look in them which I saw so often now, and the next moment left the room without a word. From that time she began to live almost wholly in her own room, except when company was present. If ever she came into the family sitting-room, and attempted to converse in her old animated way, I found it impossible to seem quite cordial, and it was a relief when she was gone again.

In society she was very gay, and had many admirers. Selma called her cousin a sad flirt; but I could never see that Hilary exerted herself to attract admiration, nor that she encouraged gentlemen to show her other than friendly attentions. Among her admirers, she seemed to favor none so much as Amasa Champlin.

"My cousin shows her usual prudence, you see," said Selma, commenting upon this preference. "If Amasa Champlin counted his dollars by hundreds instead of hundreds of thousands, you would see how much favor he would get from Hilary; about as much as she bestows upon poor Tom Trueworthy, who they do say is dying about her."

"I suppose a woman may like a wealthy man for himself and not for his riches," I observed.

"Oh, yes, if he be honest; but you know what one of those sharp old divines—Swift or somebody, I don't remember which one it was—

says, 'It is easy to see what God thinks of riches, by the sort of men he gives them to,' and I've no doubt the keen old satirist had known some just such fellows in his day as Amasa Champlin. Does that hairpin pull?"

For Selma was dressing my hair, which she often volunteered to do now, having a great fondness for so occupying herself, as she professed. I was getting used to Selma, and liked her much better than at first I had believed I would.

Doctor Maitland was very much engaged at this time in compiling a medical treatise, embodying, in a compendious form, a great deal of valuable knowledge with which his experience and extensive research had furnished him; and, except at dinner, we hardly saw him at all. So I had no opportunity to ask him about Amasa Champlin; but I spoke of the young man one day to Mr. Craig, who told me that "Champ was a first-rate fellow; had been a little wild, perhaps—all these swell chaps are—but that was thought nothing of in these days."

It might be thought nothing of in these days, but I was old-fashioned enough to think a great deal of it, and, remembering how hard Hilary had been with Alick Maitland, whose early training surely afforded some excuse for his wildness, I blamed her for allowing Amasa Champlin to be about her so much.

"A blinding mist came down and hid the land."

Ah, poor "Mary of Dee!"

When we had been about a year in Springvale Square, there came a letter to my brother, informing him that his grandson was dead. It appeared from the letter that Alick had continued his dissolute courses, and he wished his cousin—Hilary Appleton—to be thanked for that, since when he had resolved to reform, it was she who had deprived him of the restraining influence of home friends. He had died of smallpox; and the letter, which was coarsely expressed, badly written, and worse spelled; was signed by Rhoda Mussey, who claimed to have been engaged to Alick, and to have spent money in taking care of him, besides having herself taken the disease of which he died, and been brought near to death in consequence of her devotion to her betrothed. With the letter a card photograph of Alick was sent, which, at his request was to be given to Aunt Rachel, whose kindness he had remembered until the last moment. The likeness was a very good one, and it was a comfort to me, in my grief, that he had thought of me.

Doctor Maitland was greatly shaken by this intelligence, but not so much as Hilary, whose grief seemed to me to be augmented by remorse. She grew quite pale and thin, and, though she indulged in spasmodic fits of mirth when with young people, it was easy to see that she was struggling in dark waters.

"It is no more than she deserves," observed

Selma, "though I wonder if she knows how much her beauty is set off by the contrast between her pretty, pensive airs and the wild gayety into which she breaks out now and then. To the beautiful all things are becoming, you know, Aunt Rachel; and how nice that is! because the infinite variety which it allows is one of beauty's strongest attractions."

My brother sent a check for a thousand dollars to Rhoda Mussey, and desired her to consider that as atonement in full for all the sacrifices she had made for his grandson. It was by Mr. Craig's advice that a clause expressing something of this sort was appended to the doctor's letter. The agent judged that she might become troublesome otherwise. Indeed, from the tone of her reply, I think Rhoda Mussey was disappointed, and had counted upon drawing money at will from Doctor Maitland; but we did not hear from her afterward.

The winter passed without bringing us any important changes; but toward spring John began to show signs of debility. Then followed a severe cold, ending in congestion of the lungs, and, for a time, we were seriously alarmed about him. Selma was all devotion, and Hilary shyly proposed to bear her share in nursing our beloved patient, though seeming to expect a repulse. John, however, in whose hearing the request was made, desired us to give her her wish. The tears sprang into her eyes, and her quick "Thank you, Uncle Maitland!" gave me an uncomfortable feeling, though I could not have told why.

"Hilary is behaving very handsomely for her," said Selma, a few days after. "I had begun to believe that nothing but an invasion of the fashionables would draw her from her den. If only we could believe now that her devotion is purely disinterested, we might have hopes of her, might we not, dear Aunt Rachel?"

"Why may not her devotion be as disinterested as your own?" I asked, for I was beginning to tire of Selma's persistent attacks upon her cousin.

"Mine! Oh, I have nothing to expect from anybody, you know. I am not the favorite"—Selma had always kept up the fiction of Hilary's being our favorite—"and somehow I cannot help thinking it a blessing that I am not. It is so apt to make one selfish. I have had a chance to see *that* for myself."

"Whom has it made selfish?" asked John, raising his head from his pillow, though I had supposed him to be asleep.

"Whom, indeed? I shouldn't wonder if it were Aunt Rachel, here," replied Selma, laughing, and fondling me affectionately.

"Selma was speaking of her cousin," I interposed, quietly.

"I have never found that Hilary was selfish," said Doctor Maitland. "I'm afraid, Rachel, that we have misjudged Hilary. I was disappointed because Alick went away, and, at first,

I blamed her as the probable cause of his sudden disappearance. But I see things differently now. Alick would have been no comfort to us, I fear, if he had come here. I should have pampered and indulged him. The temptations which assailed him elsewhere he would not have been free from here. I think the boy had good impulses, but he lacked stability, or he might have taken Hilary's advice, and redeemed himself. I confess I had hopes that he would, until we heard that he had died without reforming. Much as I regret this, I do not think Hilary is the one to be blamed for it. I am sure she did what she thought was best for the good of all. Even if she made a mistake, and I am not at all certain that she did, I believe her error to have been of judgment and not of the heart. I have so considered it for a long time, but I was too busily occupied to speak of it. Until I became sick I was not aware, indeed, of Hilary's position among us. It has given me surprise and pain to see that she is still distrusted—that she is virtually undergoing ostracism here where I could have wished her to find a pleasant home."

"What a pity!" cried Selma, spitefully, "that the long-suffering and much-abused Hilary is off riding with Amasa Champlin, or else we might have her in here to take part in a grand tableau of—The Reconciliation."

But just at that moment there was a light rap at the door, and we heard Hilary asking, "May I come in?"

"Come," said Doctor Maitland, and when she had entered, he reached out his hand to her. "Your cousin was just wishing that you were here to take part in a grand tableau of The Reconciliation. Now, Selma, how will you arrange your tableau?"

"Don't call it mine, if you please," Selma retorted, curtly, and immediately left the room, slamming the door as she went out.

"I am afraid to think what this means," said Hilary; "but if it is that I am about to be reinstated in your favor, I am happy indeed."

"Have you missed our affection?" asked John, tenderly.

"I have walked in darkness for the want of it."

"How if I assure you that affection is all you need expect from me, that my property is already disposed of, and I do not intend to make any change?"

"Then," replied Hilary, gayly, "I may at last love you as much as I please, may I not? without being suspected of wishing to barter happiness for money?"

I could no longer hold my peace, for my heart smote me repentingly. "My dear Hilary," I cried, "John has done you justice at heart all the time. It is I that have cruelly misjudged you."

Then came the tableau, as Selma would have

called it. I will not try to describe it, affirming only that our reconciliation was complete.

"Did you have a pleasant ride?" asked Doctor Maitland, by and by.

"I have not been riding," returned Hilary, surprised.

"What! not with Amasa Champlin?"

"No, indeed. He called for me, but I did not wish to go."

"Shall I be prepared to give you two my blessing one of these days?" asked the doctor, playfully.

"Amasa Champlin will never come to you for a blessing on my account. He has been engaged to my friend Margaret Jayne more than a year."

"And you have known it all this while?" I asked.

"Yes, certainly. There were reasons why the engagement could not be made public at first; but they will be married very soon now."

After the reconciliation of that morning, Hilary became dearer to me than ever before. The engulfing tide of suspicion was at last rolled back, and the blinding mist of misrepresentation swept away, leaving my faith a clear space to find its way back again.

About a month afterward Selma was married. It was a very hasty match. We knew but little about Pelton Bursage, and what we did know was not to his advantage. I believed that Selma accepted him only to get away from us. She had never appeared the same since our reconciliation with Hilary. We did not accuse her of wilfully misrepresenting her cousin, but I thought her conscience must prick her, for she chose to adopt a resentful, sneering manner, making herself so unpleasant that if we had been at all easy about her future, it would have been a relief to get her out of the house. We remonstrated against her marriage, however, but it was all of no use. It seemed to me that there was something singular in her way of receiving our remonstrances—something more than the mere wilfulness of a girl whose lover is assailed. I cannot express what I mean better than by saying that while resenting our interference, she appeared to be indulging in hidden laughter that we should think it worth our while to offer such interference.

When she was married, Selma received valuable presents of silver and jewelry, and Doctor Maitland gave her a handsome house in New York, where she was going to live, for his wedding gift. Perhaps I misjudged her, but I fancied that she was dissatisfied with her uncle's present, and thought it not enough.

Hilary grew wonderfully buoyant in spirit when she was left alone with us. She never spoke against her cousin, but it was quite plain that Selma's influence upon her had been depressing. She now disclosed so many endearing qualities that we were in daily fear lest some one should win her away from us, though

Hilary gayly declared that we need not look to be rid of her so easily, that for her part she wanted no better example than Aunt Rachel, in whose footsteps she meant to follow. And when two years more had gone by without bringing a lover whom she was willing to accept, I began to think she might really mean what she said.

When two years more, as I said, had gone by, we, the doctor, Hilary, and I, arranged to spend the summer at the homestead with Elizabeth Prout, or rather with Mrs. Barnes. One thing and another hindered our starting, however, so that we did not get away until early in August. The summer was dry and hot. The wind was like a breath from a furnace. There were frequent signs of showers, but they all "went round," and the air, instead of being cleared by the mutterings of distant thunder, grew more and more oppressive. People said it would be sickly, and their forebodings proved correct. A malignant fever began to prevail. As is common at such times, the majority of the villagers were panic-struck, and few were found to take care of the sick. Doctor Wright, who was old and asthmatic, did what he could, and was valiantly assisted in his labors by a young man who was studying with him. But what were they among so many sufferers? Then Doctor Maitland entered the field. He had given up practice since his return to B——, being wholly engaged in his literary labors, but he took it up again now, working as untiringly as if he were a young physician eager to win laurels in his chosen profession. Wherever he went, John heard sounded the praises of Doctor Wright's student, whom, singularly enough, he never met. Nor did I, though I was giving my brother such support as I could.

"That young man's course is suicidal," said John, one day. "For five successive nights I have heard of his being with the sick all night, and it is certain that he gives himself no rest by day. I must put a stop to this. The only trouble is that I can never cross his track. Hilary, do you ever meet him?" For Hilary was also much among the sick.

"No," replied Hilary. "It really seems as if he avoids us on purpose."

"I will bring him to bay yet," said the doctor. "He is doing a noble work, but his life is too precious to be sacrificed."

"Elizabeth, who is Doctor Wright's student?" I asked, when John and Hilary had gone out again. I was getting a little worn out, and had been forbidden to leave the house that day.

"His name is John Alexander, I believe, but if he'd ha' called himself John Maitland, I wouldn't a been the one to dispute but what he come honest by his name. I never saw a plainer Maitland forehead than his is, and I've seen a good many of the family first and last."

"He can't be a Maitland. There are none of the family left but John and me," I said, quite decidedly. Nevertheless, I could not get Elizabeth's words out of my mind. I began to feel a strange interest in this young man, who *might* be a Maitland, but who was John Alexander, and who avoided us all so cleverly.

"Elizabeth," I said, at last, "I can't stay in the house. I am going out again, but I shall not be gone long."

Elizabeth remonstrated, but I was quite decided. In the first house into which I entered, I met John Alexander. He was sitting by a delirious patient, resting his head upon one hand, and his eyes had a wild, feverish lustre. Elizabeth was not mistaken. He had a right to the name of Maitland, for it was Alick.

The fever was just upon him, and the sight of me appeared to make him worse. He seemed to regard me as a creation of delirium, and I was by no means certain that I was not a fever patient, and he a visionary Alick. My recollections of that time are too confused to tell how I got him home, or how a knowledge of my discovery was conveyed to Doctor Maitland and to Hilary. The fever dealt mercifully by our poor boy, and he was spared to us. About this time a fresh, strong wind from the northwest sprung up, clearing the air, and giving renewed vigor to the villagers. Some of those who had held aloof hitherto, through fear or lassitude, now came forward to aid in taking care of the sick, so that we were left at liberty to attend to our own patient; and a more docile, grateful, considerate patient was never seen than Alick, when he began to be convalescent.

We got his story afterward. It was Selma who had visited him when he was left alone in Mr. Craig's rooms, and not in the capacity of a comforter. She declared that he had nothing to hope from his grandfather, that Hilary had represented him as utterly and hopelessly bad, and that Hilary ruled them all as with a rod of iron. There could be no gainsaying what *she* had asserted.

"They are all in a commotion," so Selma assured him, "about the disgrace you have brought upon the family, or, at least, all but Aunt Rachel, and she is too *soft* to have any influence. I have said what I could in your favor, but, dear me! I'm of no account. No body minds anything *I* say."

So Alick resolved to trouble his relatives no more. Hilary's counsel, however, he did not choose to set aside. She might be his enemy, but he had the sense to see that she had placed the right course before him. He would place himself yet in a position where his haughty kindred need not be ashamed of him. He kept to his purpose manfully. For two years he worked hard, studying in his leisure moments, and laying up his money. Then he went to Doctor Wright. He was unable to conjecture

who Rhoda Mussey could be, or why he was reported dead. When the card picture of himself was shown him, he at once declared it to be one that, by her request, he had given his cousin Selma when she visited him at Mr. Craig's rooms.

This we thought very strange, and could make nothing out of it. When we had gone back to town, Alick accompanying us, for he was to finish his professional studies with Doctor Maitland, we told Mr. Craig about the photograph, and asked him what he thought of it. He declined giving an opinion then. A few days afterward, happening to be present when a letter from Selma was brought in, he picked up the envelope bearing my address, and examined it carefully.

"It strikes me, Miss Maitland," he said, then, "that this writing is at least second cousin to that of Rhoda Mussey."

"What! This elegant hand like the scrawling penmanship of those Mussey letters? You must be mistaken."

It was I who was mistaken, however. Mr. Craig went into the matter at once, and with those penetrating eyes of his succeeded at length in looking through the whole mystery. He learned first of all that the check sent by Doctor Maitland to Rhoda Mussey had been presented, and the money received by Pelton Burrage. Hilary acknowledged that Selma had known Burrage while at school, and had narrowly escaped being expelled on account of the acquaintance. She had promised, however, to give up meeting him, and Hilary heard no more about him afterwards until he appeared in B—— as a suitor for Selma's hand. Mr. Craig, wishing to learn something further about this man Burrage, went to Stanley, the town where the girls had attended school. He there met a clergyman, living in an adjoining town, who certified to having married Pelton Burrage and Rhoda Mussey. Further investigation proved beyond question that Selma Cranstoun was Rhoda Mussey, or rather that the two were identical. Selma's marriage was contracted thus clandestinely because Burrage was not then in a position to support a wife, and she did not choose to give up the generous allowance of her uncle, whose principal heiress she also hoped some day to become.

Finding that she could not supply in the regular way the demands for money made upon her by her husband, the story of Alick Maitland's death, and of Rhoda Mussey's sacrifices for her betrothed, was devised by Selma, and the money sent to that devoted bereaved one passed into the hands of Pelton Burrage, as we have seen. That of which she had accused Hilary, the endeavor to get Alick out of the way in order herself to have a chance at his grandfather's property, Selma had actually attempted, combining with it an effort to destroy our faith in Hilary.

When this last scheme was found to have fallen hopelessly flat, Selma abandoned the hope of succeeding to the Maitland property, and, finding the restraints of her uncle's home irksome, she wished to join her husband. If she were to confess her marriage, however, she feared that revelation might lead to other unpleasant discoveries. Besides, she could hope nothing more from Doctor Maitland's generosity if he were made aware of the deception she had practised. She therefore decided upon the farce of a new marriage with the man who was already her husband, trusting to her own cleverness to keep the irregularity of her proceedings hidden in the future as she had done in the past. There! I have not patience to write another word about Mrs. Burrage. Let her rest in peace, if she can. I wish her no harm, but I should be sorry ever to have to look upon her false face again.

Alick endears himself to us more and more every day. John has great pride in him. I am foolishly tender of the boy, I fear, and Hilary—but at the outset I resolved that I would not make a love story of this, so I think I had better say no more about Alick and Hilary.
